

YOU HAVE RIGHTS!

What rights?



Save the Children

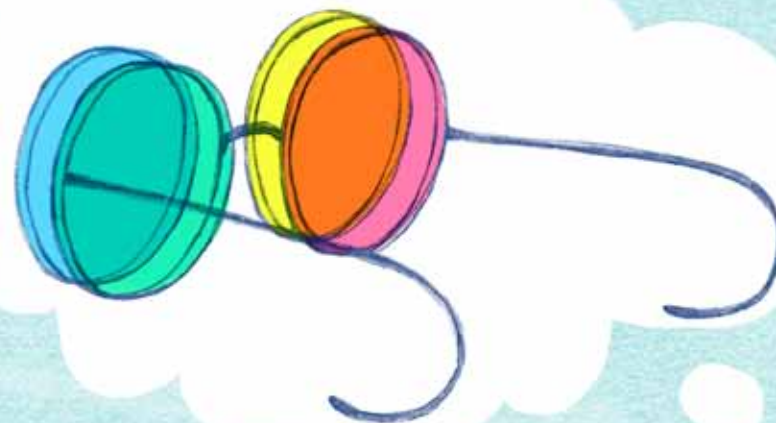


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THESE ARE YOUR RIGHTS

All children and young people have the same rights of equal value, regardless of their religion, language, skin colour, whether they are a boy or a girl or where they are from. This means you! The rights you have include the right to be treated with respect by other people, the right to food, water, a home and healthcare. You have the right to develop and grow and be part of your community. You have the right to education, you have the right to information, protection from violence and to have a say in decisions about issues that affect you. All these rights and others can be found in one place – known as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

A child is every person in the world under the age of 18.



To really understand your rights in the CRC, you need to look at each and every right through four different lenses. These lenses are also known as the Convention's general principles and they are: Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 3 (best interests of the child), Article 6 (right to survival and development) and Article 12 (right to express opinions, be heard and have these views taken into account in decisions).

Remind grown-ups about the four lenses! Otherwise they may:

- end up treating one child or young person differently from others (discrimination);
- pay attention to the parent's interests or the interests of other groups more than children and young people;
- forget that children and young people must always have the opportunity to continue developing, for instance through play and going to school; or
- forget to listen to what children and young people say and just listen to other adults.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RIGHTS

THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The CRC has been signed (the technical word is “ratify”) by all countries worldwide apart from Somalia and the United States. Signing the CRC means a government have promised to follow it. But all countries have a long way to go to ensure that all children get their rights met. As a child or young person, you can get involved in making your rights a reality if you would like to.

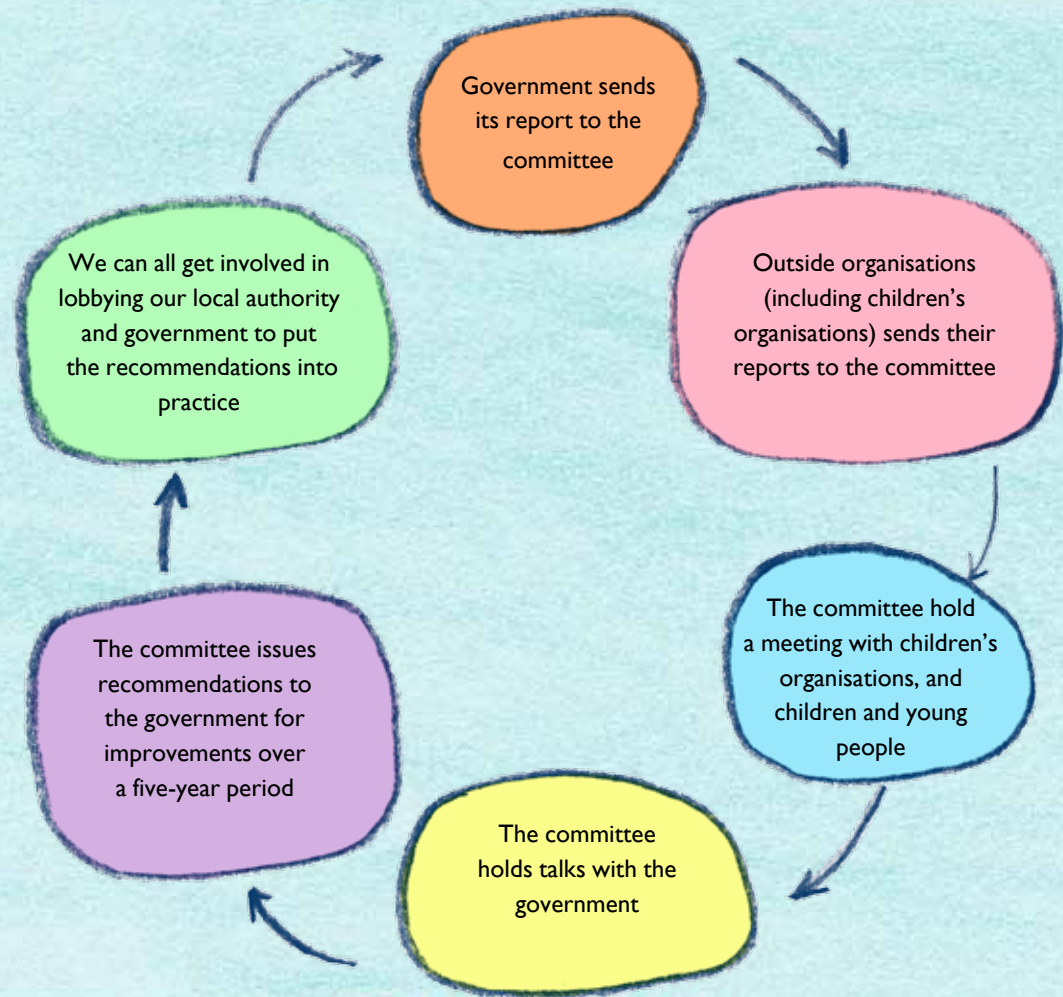
THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The United Nations has a Committee of 18 people from around the world who are experts on children’s rights. The Committee’s job is to monitor how every country lives up to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The government of every country is required to send a report to the Committee two years after they first make the promise to respect children’s rights and then once every five years. The report must set out what they have and haven’t done to respect children’s rights. To ensure the Committee get the full picture of how well children have their rights respected in the country, outside organisations (including child-led organisations) are allowed to report to the Committee on what they think about conditions for children, enabling the Committee to gain as accurate an impression as possible.

The Committee then meets the government for talks and issues recommendations for improvements it wants the government to achieve within five years (when the government submits its next report). Recommendations may include requiring things like schools to improve prevention of bullying and requiring governments to listen to children and take their views into account when taking decisions.

You can help the Committee to put pressure on your government or local authority to ensure that the committee’s recommendations are acted on.

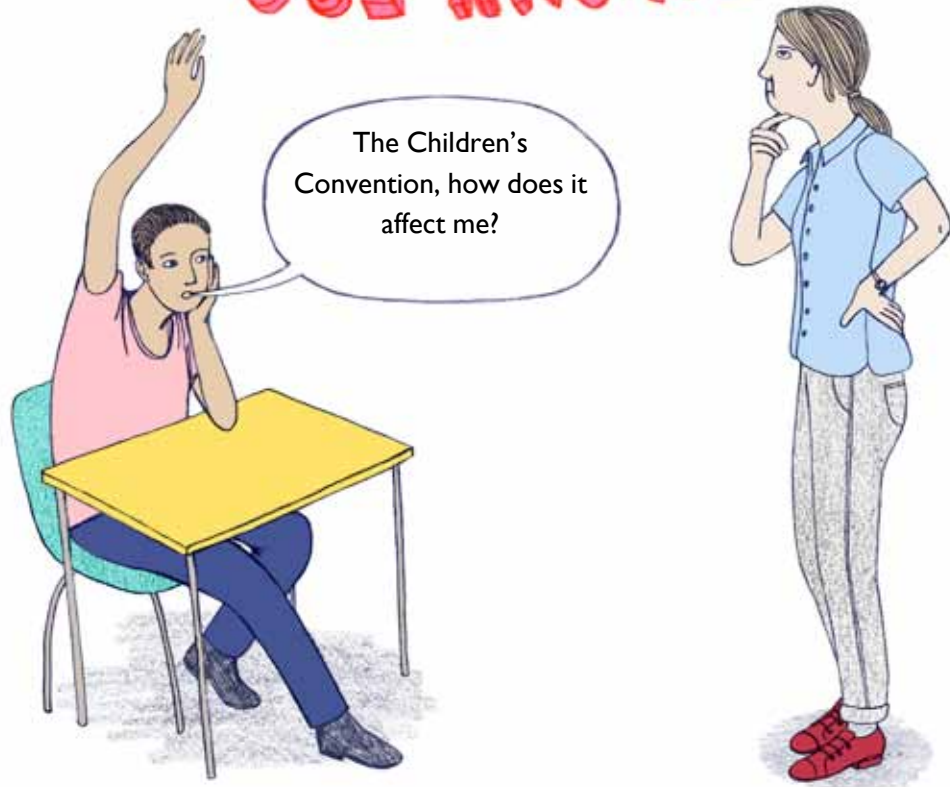
See www.crin.org/NGOGroup for more information or search for the Committee on the Rights of the Child.



HOW CAN THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD BE RESPECTED?

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child says a country needs to work in 12 ways to make sure that all children have their rights met. We will describe these 12 approaches here.

SHARE, GAIN AND USE KNOWLEDGE



Many people today don't understand what the CRC means. Take schools, for example, some teachers are not trained in the Convention and can not pass that knowledge on to their students, parents and other school staff.

Generally speaking, more work is needed to change the attitudes and prejudices that many people have towards children and young people. Training, information and open debate are vital.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING



If you work with and/or for children and young people you should have the opportunity to regularly learn about children's rights.

There are often no laws requiring people to be trained on the CRC. This means that many people who work with and/or for children (politicians, doctors, judges, teachers, social workers and others) don't know as much as they should about children's rights.

Lack of awareness also exists among parents and among children themselves. It's not just about knowing the various rights and protections but also about understanding what the CRC means and being able to act upon it.

The CRC should carry more weight than a countries' national legislation. National laws should not go against the CRC unless they give stronger rights to children and young people. Government's should regularly check their laws to make sure that there isn't a conflict. In the event of a conflict priority should be given to the CRC.

Observe the four fundamental principles:

Article 2 – Non-discrimination

Article 3 – The best interests of the child

Article 6 – Children's inherent right to life and to survival and development

Article 12 – Children's right to express their views freely and the opportunity to be heard

It is critical that people who make and apply laws understand and take account of these four principles and the other rights in the CRC in order to ensure they make the right decisions.



All countries should have a strategy and action plan for putting children's rights into practice.

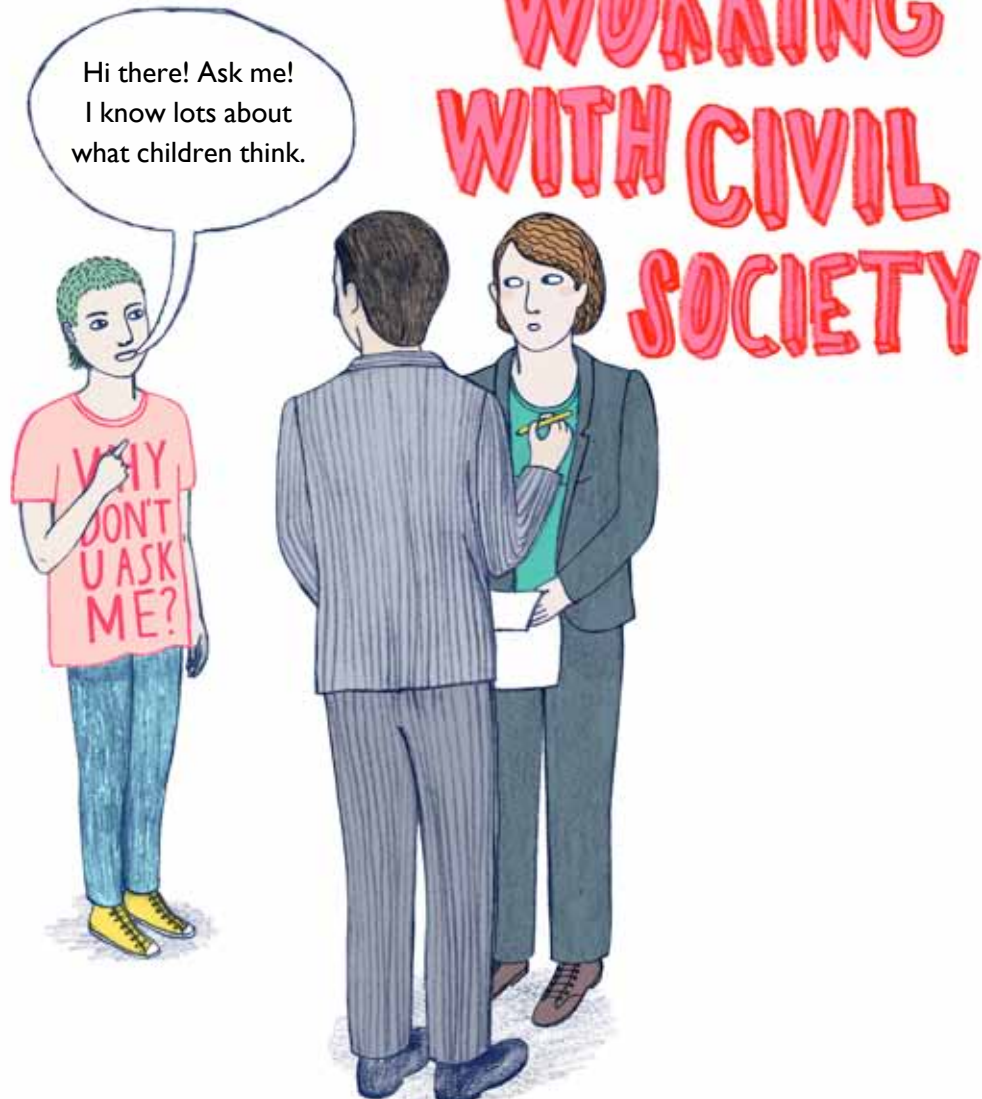
Some countries have excellent strategies that set out how the government will ensure that children have all their rights respected but many don't.

One of the main problems is that people, including children themselves and professionals working in schools and local authorities, don't know that their own country has a strategy on children's rights!



Governments must regularly work with civil society when working to respect children's rights. Children and young people are also part of civil society! Adults must be prepared to adapt to young people and let them have their say. Only then can we have a good discussion. Politicians also have to understand how to talk to children and young people.

Have the courage to ask hard questions!



WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE CHILDRENS RIGHTS A REALITY



Different parts of a government (including both national and local government) should make sure that they work together so that everyone who is making decisions that will impact on children and young people are respecting their rights. This could mean having a special government team who is responsible for ensuring that everyone knows about the Convention and is thinking about it when making decisions or developing services for children and young people.

WORKING INTERNATIONALLY



If a country has problems in respecting the CRC it has the option of bringing in outside support and working together with other nations. This could include advice and support in helping children traumatised by armed conflict. It can also include financial assistance.

Those of us living in well off countries should help countries who are less fortunate than ourselves.

It is critical that the rights of children and young people are central in this type of cooperation.

The children's ombudsman/commissioner is a person whose job is to hold people in power to account and make sure they do what they are supposed to do in relation to respecting children's rights. All governments should establish a children's ombudsman/commissioner in law. He or she should devise different ways to ensure that the Convention is respected.

Can you turn to a children's ombudsman/commissioner for help? If not, ask for change!

As a child you should have the possibility to have the support from the ombudsman/commissioner if you have complaints. The ombudsman/commissioner should also be able to carry out investigations on issues affecting children, or particular groups of children.

ESTABLISHING A CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER



When a country is going through tough times economically it is more important than ever to take account of how financial issues affect children and young people. A government must make sure it can say how much money it is spending on children and young people.

You have the right to have your say and be heard when your school, local authority or national government takes decisions on matters relating to children and young people. It is important for you to see where the money goes and how and why it is spent. Is it spent on good things and in the right way? Are you satisfied or can things be improved?

Talk to your local authority or school and ask them to bring children and young people together so they can learn about where the money goes and how it is used.

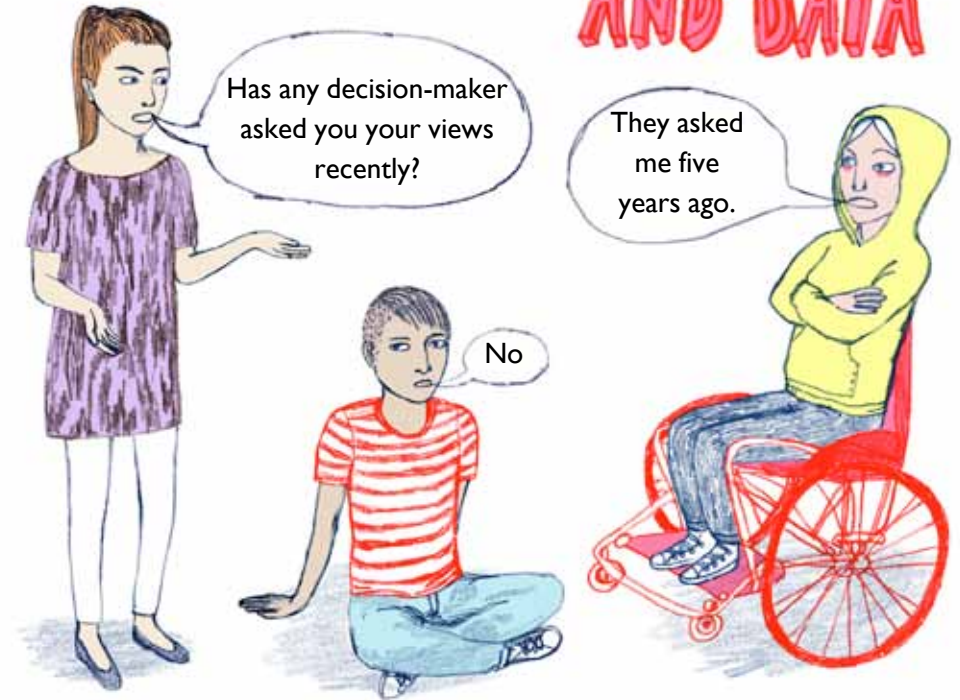
Ask your school, local authority or national government: Is there a children's budget? We want to see it! We want to be involved!

Make good suggestions. Explain. Work together.

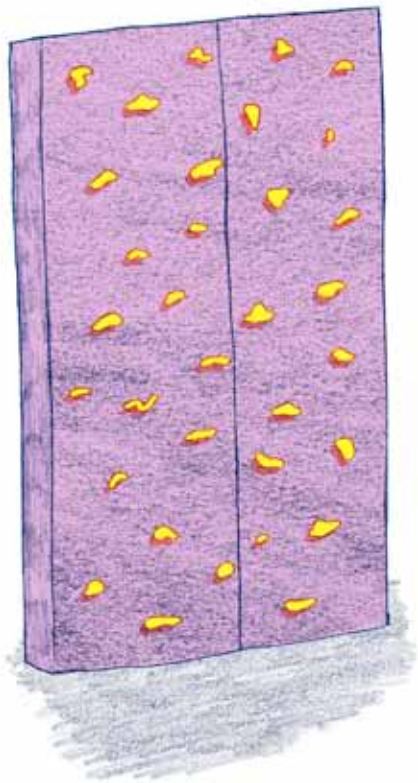
MAKING A CHILDREN'S BUDGET



COLLECTING INFORMATION AND DATA



It is vital that the people who make important decisions affecting children and young people properly understand the conditions in which they live. Without that information, they cannot make good decisions. Therefore it is crucial that all government agencies, local and central, collect adequate data about all groups of children and young people. This data can be about children who are living in poverty, exposed to bullying, vulnerable at home, with mental health issues, or who have a disability. No groups of children and young people should be excluded.



FOLLOWING UP THE RESULTS

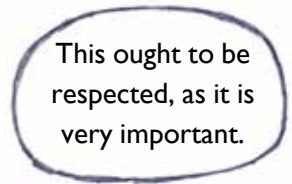
When politicians, head teachers and others decide to take action which impacts on children and young people, it is important that they go back at a later date to make sure that the work was actually done – and in the right way. If the outcome wasn't great, we need to find out why and what to do instead. Otherwise, the same mistakes may be made again.

Government's should also sign up to other international treaties (the technical word is "ratify") such as the UN conventions on torture, political rights and the rights of women and people with disabilities.

All rights are equally important and apply regardless of a person's sexual orientation, age, whether or not they have a disability or are male or female.

These are the UN Core Conventions on Human Rights:

- Political and civil rights
- Economic, social and cultural rights
- Elimination of racial discrimination
- Elimination of discrimination against women
- Against torture
- The rights of the child
- The rights of migrant workers
- The rights of persons with disabilities
- Protection from enforced disappearance



SIGNING AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION



FINALLY, SOME WORDS OF ADVISE

Don't give up. Think of ideas. Make suggestions. Seek change. Talk to an adult you trust and who listens.

Talk to your local authority, your school, politicians and parents – ask questions and seek change!

Ask “Do you really know what the Convention on the Rights of the Child is about?”

Use and share your ideas. Be creative...

Change is possible. We can do it if we want to!

The Convention says that adults have to listen to children and young people and take their views into account. When you have explained your point of view, ask the adults to tell you what they were thinking when they made their decision and how they've taken on board what you told them.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Here are some suggestions on questions to ask politicians, other professionals working with and/or for children, but also children and young people and parents about the different approaches needed for respecting children's rights.

Share, gain and use knowledge: How good is the understanding of children's rights among politicians, teachers and other adults in your community?

Education and training: Are adults, children and young people in your area given training on children's rights? If so, whom? How much? How often?

Legislation in your country: Does the Convention always carry more weight than your countries national legislation?

Strategy and action plan: Is there a national plan of action on children's rights? Is there one in your local area?

Working with civil society: What sort of cooperation is there between politicians and children and young people in your area?

Working together: Do the different parts of your government work together to ensure that children's rights are respected?

Working internationally: Does your government make sure that children's rights are central when cooperating with other countries?

Children's ombudsman/commissioner: Do all children and young people know about the national children's ombudsman/commissioner? Is there a local ombudsman/commissioner in your area?

Children's budget: Can your government say how much it spends on children and young people?

Collecting information and data: Have children and young people been asked about if their rights have been respected?

Following up the results: How does your national and local government follow up on the work they are doing for children and young people?

International conventions: Has your country signed (ratified) the UN core conventions on human rights?

IMPORTANT PAPERS

When talking to adults and asking questions you might find that they are not familiar with what you are talking about. Maybe they will tell you that they have never heard about the CRC or a national strategy on children's rights. If this happens, it would be helpful to tell them where to find these documents. Here are some documents, papers and webpages that are useful.

General documents:

General Comment No 5 (this is the document where the 12 different approaches in this folder are described in full) search for Committee on the Rights of the Child on the web and you will find this document.

The CRC articles in English full text: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Summary of the CRC (by the Children's Rights Alliance for England):
<http://www.crae.org.uk/rights/uncrc.html>

Documents only for the UK:

Save the Children UK site - information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/child-rights.htm>

UK State Party report: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/u/uk%20government%20periodic%20report%20to%20the%20uncrc%20-%20july%202007.pdf>

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2008 Concluding Observations:
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC.C.GBR.CO.4.pdf>

Child friendly version of the concluding observations (by the Welsh Government): <http://www.childcomwales.org.uk/uploads/publications/142.pdf>

UK Children's Commissioners:

England <http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/>

Wales <http://www.childcom.org.uk/>

Scotland <http://www.sccyp.org.uk/>

Northern Ireland <http://www.niccy.org/>

WE ARE the world's leading independent organisation for children.

OUR VISION is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

OUR MISSION is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

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Do you sometimes
feel that you are not treated fairly?
That people who make decisions
don't take account of your views?
Then read this booklet to find out more
information about your rights, and what
governments should be doing to make
sure that your rights are being respected.
You will get information and inspiration
on how to get involved to help
ensure that governments
keep their promises
to children and
young people.



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